



MINOR PARTY CANDIDATES AND BALLOT ACCESS

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QUESTION

How do minor party candidates gain ballot access?

SUMMARY

Minor party candidates, like major party candidates, have their names placed on the ballot after receiving their party's nomination ([CGS § 9-379](#)). A political party may nominate candidates only if it has attained status as a major or minor party, which it earns by demonstrating a certain amount of public support at the last regular election.

A "minor party" is one that is not a major party and whose candidate for the office in question received, under the same party designation, at least 1% of the votes cast for the same office at the last regular election ([CGS § 9-372\(6\)](#)). Minor parties, unlike major parties, attain their status, and thus ballot access, on a case-by-case basis and cannot nominate candidates to those offices for which they do not have the status.

For example, a minor party may nominate a candidate in Senate district X in the 2014 election if a candidate running under the same party designation in the 2012 election received at least 1% of the votes cast for state senator in district X. However, the minor party status (and ballot access) would apply only to Senate district X. The party must separately qualify for minor party status for each office for which it seeks to nominate candidates. If the party does not have minor party status for a particular office, a candidate may run under the party's designation only by petitioning onto the ballot ([CGS 9-453a et seq.](#)).

Major parties, on the other hand, may nominate candidates to any state, district, or municipal office, but they must demonstrate a greater amount of public support to retain their status (see BACKGROUND).

For more information on ballot access and major and minor party formation and nominating procedures, see OLR Report [2013-R-0145](#).

BACKGROUND

A “major party” is one whose (1) candidate for governor received at least 20% of the total votes cast for that office at the last gubernatorial election or (2) enrolled membership, as of the last gubernatorial election, was at least 20% of the total enrollment in all political parties in the state ([CGS § 9-372\(5\)](#)).

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